



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF THE
PROBATE COURT ADMINISTRATOR

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Probate Court Administrator

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Manchester Psychiatrist Receives Statewide Public Service Award

West Hartford, CT – Manchester-based psychiatrist Dr. Christine L. Shapter, MD, has received the 2023 Daniel F. Caruso Award, presented by the Office of the Probate Court Administrator and the judges of the Connecticut Probate Assembly, at their annual meeting on April 19.

Dr. Shapter has served the State of Connecticut Probate Court system performing independent evaluations since 2019. She received her medical doctorate from the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, and completed her residency in psychiatry with an emphasis in child and adolescent psychiatry at the Institute of Living in Hartford, CT.

Dr. Shapter grew up in West Hartford, and received her undergraduate degree in nursing from University of Saint Joseph. She is board-certified in psychiatry, and is a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology. Dr. Shapter is the associate medical director of Perception Programs in Willimantic and an adjunct professor at the University of Saint Joseph in the graduate nursing department. She also serves on the Graduate Nursing Advisory Committee and is a published author and has given numerous presentations at national conferences.

Middletown Probate Judge Joseph Marino, who presented her with the award at the annual meeting, said in early 2019, he received a call from Dr. Shapter, who expressed interest in performing evaluations as an independent psychiatrist. "I decided to give her a shot," Judge Marino said. "It was the best decision I ever made."

"Since that time, she has performed thousands of evaluations across a wide array of mental health matters throughout our entire system," Judge Marino said. "In 2022 alone, Dr. Shapter was appointed to over 700 cases by 34 of our courts. That's extraordinary and that's all in one year."

Judge Marino said Dr. Shapter is a unique and extremely gifted combination of intelligence, professionalism and also compassion. “Simply put, she is the most dedicated and hardest working person I’ve ever known,” he said.

Dr. Shapter noted that one year after she started working with the Probate Courts, the pandemic hit. “While the highways were deserted and [others were] on recess, we in the Probate Courts had to keep working,” she said. “Week after week, month after month, Judge Marino and I huddled around his computer screen remotely getting through all of the annual reviews for Connecticut Valley Hospital.” Dr. Shapter said many of those patients contracted COVID-19 during that time. After all, she explained, the psychiatrically ill and institutionalized patients are frequently compromised, vulnerable and have a high likelihood of dying young.

“The work can be grueling and sometimes disheartening, but it is oftentimes very meaningful,” Dr. Shapter said. “This work is challenging because we so often determine a patient may need to remain in a locked unit, and in doing so, we have to be able to sit with patients in some of their darkest moments,” but she added, “It is also a gift to work with some of the finest, most compassionate judges in the state, as well as the phenomenal clerks who make it all possible.”

Connecticut’s 54 Probate Courts and six Regional Children’s Probate Courts assist thousands of low-income seniors to age in place in their own homes; supervise the care and finances of individuals who cannot care for themselves; support individuals with mental health conditions to live in the community instead of being institutionalized; and help thousands of children stay in familiar surroundings with family and friend guardians rather than being placed in foster care. Probate Courts save taxpayers more than \$2.1 billion each year by avoiding more costly state services.

Probate Court Administrator Beverly Streit-Kefalas said the Daniel F. Caruso Award recognizes significant supporters of the Probate Courts and its mission of public service. This award was renamed in 2018 in honor and memory of Probate Judge Daniel F. Caruso, a former state representative who also served as the Fairfield Probate Court Judge for more than 20 years before his sudden death in 2018. For more information about Connecticut’s Probate Courts, visit ctprobate.gov.

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